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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [MEPN](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN RAFAH/GAZA BORDER SITREP; UPDATE ON GOE
HUMANITARIAN DONATIONS FOR GAZA

REF: JERUSALEM 2820 (NOTAL)

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph six.

Summary

¶2. (C) Local sources report that the Egyptian and Palestinian Rafah terminals may open briefly July 6 or 7 to allow a limited number of Palestinians stranded inside the Egyptian border terminal to enter Gaza through the Rafah gate. Meanwhile, approximately 2,500 other Palestinians are reported to be waiting in the terminal's parking lot or in nearby towns for the Rafah border to open. The border has been closed since the June 23 attack on Israel's Kerem Shalom facility and the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier. The Egyptian Red Crescent Society is providing shelter and limited food/water supplies for Palestinians stuck at the border terminal, and are trying to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian food/medicine donations from Egypt to Gaza via Rafah. Thousands of tons of food donations remain in Egyptian warehouses awaiting Israeli permission to transit into Gaza, and 250 tons of flour is stuck and spoiling in the "no-man's land" between Egypt and Israel. Post also stands ready to assist with efforts to repatriate a group of American citizens stranded inside Gaza. End summary.

Thousands of Gazans Stranded Near Rafah

¶3. (C) During a July 6 conversation with poloff, Egyptian Red Crescent Society Director Mamduh Gabr stated that approximately 380 Palestinians remain stranded inside Egypt's Rafah border terminal facility, and that thousands of other Palestinians are waiting anxiously in the terminal's parking lot and in nearby towns for news of the terminal's re-opening. MFA Palestinian Affairs Director Randa Labib, Palestinian Embassy, and other sources confirmed these approximations and shared rumors that the border would be opened temporarily July 6 or 7 to allow those 380 within the facility to transit to Gaza. As of 1700 local time, the border has not yet opened. DAO sources report that the transfer will take place late on July 6, but that only 250 will be allowed to transit.

¶4. (C) Gabr explained that the Egyptian Red Crescent Society provided two large tents with mattresses for those stranded at the border without shelter, sent 50 volunteers to care for the stranded travelers, and was distributing minimal supplies of food and beverages. The MFA and the Ministry of Health were devising plans for the provision of toilet facilities and medical care, should the border into Gaza remain closed.

Gabr said that the Red Crescent was coordinating donations from Egyptian and regional NGOs, including a donation by the International Red Cross.

Food Donations for Gaza

¶ 15. (C) Asked if Egyptian food donations were being allowed into Gaza, Gabr stated that the process had started working fairly smoothly in early June, but that all transfers were stopped following the June 23 attack. Gabr said that between June 6 and June 21, the Egyptian Red Crescent sent 2,000 tons of flour to Gaza, via Israel's Kerem Shalom. Another 1,200 tons of food donations that had been "approved" by Israel remained in Egyptian warehouses. Additionally, Gabr said that approximately 250-280 tons of flour was stuck within the "no-man's land" between Egypt and the Palestinian border facility. Gabr requested USG assistance in pressing Israel to allow those food stocks to be transferred to Gaza before they spoiled, and to allow the remainder of the donations to be transferred. Gabr said that the GOE was coordinating its efforts with UNRWA and that Egypt had a total of 10,000 tons of flour, rice, and sugar to donate to Gaza.

¶ 16. (U) Action Request: Post requests the Department to consider steps to help facilitate the continuance of humanitarian aid to Gaza via Egypt. End action request.

Amcits Stranded in Gaza

¶ 17. (SBU) Post stands ready to assist with efforts to help the stranded American citizens currently in Gaza (reftel).

The Consular Section's American Citizen Services Acting Chief, Eric Meyer, is the point of contact on this issue, and Beth Smith is the current Consular Section Duty Officer. Both can be reached via the Embassy switchboard at: (2 02) 797-3300.

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